



Definiteness and Indefiniteness of Nouns in English and Albanian: A Contrastive Analysis

Agnesa Çanta

PhD Candidate, Faculty of Foreign Languages,
University of Tirana, Albania
Faculty of Education, University of Prishtina
"Hasan Prishtina", Kosovo

Doi: 10.2478/ajis-2018-0014

Abstract

Different languages have different ways of indicating the definiteness and indefiniteness of nouns. In English, as in most languages, the category of definiteness and indefiniteness is not a grammatical category of nouns. It is rather a semantic category that is mainly conveyed by means of two articles: the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a/an*. In Albanian, on the other hand, the category of definiteness and indefiniteness is a grammatical category realised mainly by case endings and the indefinite article *një (a/an)* which, along with the case endings, is used to indicate only the indefiniteness, as the definiteness relies exclusively on case endings. The main purpose of this paper was to indicate that, in spite of the difference in the ways they express the definiteness and indefiniteness which account for some of their functional differences, definite and indefinite nouns in English and Albanian also show some similarities. The contrastive analysis indicates that the definite nouns in English and Albanian share their main functions, namely the specific reference and the generic reference, although they do not certainly share the cataphoric reference, whereas the indefinite nouns share the descriptive, classifying, and categorising function as well as the numerical function, but they do not share the generic function.

Keywords: nouns, definite, indefinite, English, Albanian.

1. Introduction

Definiteness and indefiniteness as a grammatical category concerns the contradiction between the general meaning and the specific meaning of the noun (Likaj & Çabej, 2013). Even though in English, the category of definiteness and indefiniteness is not a grammatical category, the concept is the same, albeit realised in different ways. In English, the category of definiteness and indefiniteness is mainly realised by means of two articles:

1. The definite article *the*, and
2. The indefinite article *a/an*

The definite article *the* indicates that a noun stands out from other nouns of the same class, whereas the indefinite article *a/an* indicates that a noun shares the same features and it is not distinguished from other nouns of the same class. The definite article *the* is used with a noun that has been mentioned before, and it is known or identifiable, whereas the indefinite article *a/an* is used with a noun that has not been previously mentioned in the context, and it is, therefore unknown (Aarts, 2011). In English, articles are elements that mainly accompany the common nouns, even though some proper nouns make take them as well. E.g.

Harry is the student who won the first prize in the competition.

Harry is a student of the Faculty of Engineering.

Both articles may be traced back to Old English. The definite article *the* is considered a weaker form of the demonstrative pronoun *that*, whereas the indefinite article *a/an* is considered a weaker form of the numeral *one* (Kabashi, 2000). Some grammarians also accept a third article which they refer to as “zero article”. This implies that, in their view, all common nouns should take articles, but even though “the presence of nothing” as opposed to “the absence of anything” is a very common concept in linguistics, there are disagreements concerning its operation (Berry, 2012). However, the matter posed here is whether the absence of the two articles *a/an* and *the* should imply the presence of the “zero article” only with common nouns, or it should also apply to proper nouns, considering the fact that they do not usually take articles.

In English, articles as indicators of definiteness and indefiniteness are, at first sight, seen as fairly simple and easily acquired determiners, but despite being the most frequently used determiners, with an immense role in the process of communication, they are the determiners that usually cause most of the difficulties to the foreign speakers of the language. These difficulties are, among others, attributed to the fact that each of the articles has several functions, and this affects their proper use. It is precisely because of their function that Rumanjceva and Kalniora (2003) refer to the definite article as an “individualising or limiting” article, whereas the indefinite article is referred to as a “classifying” article.

According to Palmer (2003), although “articles are the simplest adjectives of all”, their omission may be essential to the meaning of the noun. Dykes (2007, p.68) calls them “nothing words” as in her opinion they do not have a concrete meaning and do not present any image to the imagination, but she emphasises that their function is important. Therefore, the appropriate use of articles is imperative for all those who pretend to speak this language correctly.

In Albanian, definiteness and indefiniteness as a grammatical category of nouns is manifested through contradiction between two different types of declension and their system of endings, namely the definite declension and the indefinite declension (Agalliu et al., 2002, p.120), and it is conditioned by the semantic content of the common nouns (Likaj & Çabej, 2013, p.59). In Albanian, this category is realised mainly by case endings and the indefinite article *një* (*a/an*), which, along with the case endings, is used to indicate only indefiniteness, as the definiteness relies on case endings exclusively. Except the article *një*, determiners *ndonjë*, *ca*, *njëfarë*, or *disa* may also be used to indicate an indefinite noun (Newmark, Hubbard & Prifti, 1982). However, only the determiner *njëfarë* is distinguished because of the ending that the noun takes which may associate with a definite noun, e.g. *njëfarë krenarie*.

A common definite noun is used to indicate one or more things known as single or specific, distinguished from other things of the same class. E.g. *puna* (*work*), *motivi* (*motif*), *ëndrrat* (*dreams*), *studimet* (*studies*), *arritjet* (*achievements*), etc. A common definite noun has an individualised meaning. Individualisation of the common noun may also occur if the common indefinite noun is accompanied with a demonstrative pronoun (Agalliu et al., 2002). E.g. *ky institucion* (*this institution*), *ajo çështje* (*that issue*), *këto piktura* (*these paintings*), *ato projekte* (*those projects*), etc. A common indefinite noun, on the other hand, is used in its general meaning to indicate a thing (or things) with a range of special characteristics of a class to which it belongs and represents (Likaj & Çabej, 2013, p.60). E.g. *familje* (*family*), *prindër* (*parents*), *fëmijë* (*child*), *mik* (*friend*), *shtëpi* (*house*), etc.

This paper will focus more on the differences and similarities between the definite and indefinite nouns in English and Albanian, with emphasis on the common nouns, rather than on the category of definiteness and indefiniteness itself.

2. Definiteness and Indefiniteness of Nouns in English and Albanian

Nouns in English and Albanian show considerable differences in regard to the category of definiteness and indefiniteness. Nevertheless, in spite of the different ways in which these nouns express their definiteness and indefiniteness, their primary functions are nonetheless the same.

In Albanian, the grammatical category of definiteness and indefiniteness is manifested through the contradiction between the two types of declension: the definite and indefinite declension with the entire system of endings they entail (Likaj & Çabej, 2013), whereas in English, as an analytic

language, as there is only one marked case, namely the genitive case, there are no declensions of nouns, therefore no system of endings, either. Although, this undoubtedly constitutes a major difference between the nouns in these two languages because it concerns the ways they realise this category, there is another important difference. This difference concerns the classes of nouns used as definite and indefinite nouns in English and Albanian. In Albanian, both common nouns and proper nouns may be used as definite and indefinite nouns, as all these nouns are declined and take respective case endings, although the use of proper nouns as indefinite nouns is rather restricted (Newmark, Hubbard & Prifti, 1982). In English, on the other hand, it is mainly the common nouns that take articles. Hence, the majority of researchers, including Greenbaum & Quirk (1990), Bache & Davidsen-Nielsen (1997), Nelson (2001), Huddleston & Pullum (2002), Eastwood (2002), Alexander (2003), Aarts (2011), and many others claim that the definite article *the* is used with all common nouns, whereas the indefinite article is used with countable nouns in the singular number. However, O' Dwyer (2006) opposes this view as he argues that all noun classes may take the definite article *the*. Almost in the same line is also the researcher Brinton (2000) who in her discussions on articles on a broader scale emphasises that the definite article and the indefinite article may be used to convert a proper noun into a common noun.

Nevertheless, all these researchers somehow ignore the discussion on the use of articles with proper nouns as, generally, these nouns do not take articles, therefore, they are said to take the zero article. But, the same may be said about common nouns as well, namely that when they are not used with articles, they take zero article. Furthermore, the Russian scholar, Blokh (1983) gives this explanation concerning the use of the definite article, the indefinite article, and the zero article: the definite article *the* represents identification, the indefinite article *a/an* represents unidentification which may be a relative generalisation or "classification", whereas the zero article represents an absolute generalisation or "abstraction" (p.82)

However, in spite of the differences in the ways in which they express the definiteness and indefiniteness, and the type of nouns that may be used as definite and indefinite nouns in these languages, there are also similarities between the nouns in English and Albanian. In both languages, the definiteness has mainly an "individualising" character, whereas the indefiniteness has a "classifying" character. In English, the context in which a noun is used is of great importance because it determines the appropriate use of articles (Eastwood, 2002). The context is also very significant in Albanian as well.

2.1 *Definite nouns in English and Albanian*

Definite nouns in English and Albanian differ in the ways in which they realise the definiteness, but not in their main functions. These functions are mainly referred to as:

1. The specific reference
2. The generic reference

A definite noun is used in specific reference in these cases:

1. When the speaker or the reader has previous knowledge of the person or the thing he/she is referring to. In English, unlike Albanian, this kind of reference is known as *situational reference* (Kabashi, 2000), and it applies to the definite nouns that refer to people, animals, and things. E.g.

Mr. Nelson advised the student to study harder.

Z. Nelson e këshilloi studentin/en të studiojë më shumë.

Jane usually takes the dog out for a walk in the evenings.

Jane zakonisht e nxjerr qenin për shëtitje mbrëmjeve.

Jim always uses the dictionary when he encounters an unknown word.

Jim gjithmonë e përdor fjalorin kur rastis në fjalë të panjohur.

In English, unlike Albanian, the situational reference also applies to the definite nouns denoting places. In Albanian, in such a case, an indefinite noun is used. E.g.

There are many people on the street. Ka shumë njerëz në rrugë.

2. When the noun is used for the second time to refer to a person or a thing that was previously mentioned. This kind of reference is known as *anaphoric reference* in both languages. E.g.

Mrs. Rochester has two children, a son and a daughter. The son owns a construction company, whereas the daughter is a painter.

Z. Rochester ka dy fëmijë, një djalë dhe një vajzë. Djali posedon një kompani ndërtimi, kurse vajza është piktoare.

3. In both languages, a definite noun may also have the so-called *cataphoric reference*, according to which the identity of the referent is determined by what follows (Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990, p.79). Thus, it is the opposite of the anaphoric reference. Nevertheless, this kind of reference is not mentioned in the grammar books of Albanian. E.g.

They are working on the project which they will present to the CEO in the board meeting.

Ata janë duke punuar në projektin të cilin do t'ia prezentojnë drejtorit në mbledhjen e bordit.

4. In English and Albanian, definite nouns are used to refer to objects that are considered unique, such as: *the universe - universi, the world - bota, the earth - toka, the sky - qielli, the sun - dielli, the moon - hëna*, etc. (Thomson, & Martinet, 1991). In Albanian, this group of nouns also includes the nouns denoting seasons and months (Agalliu et. al., 2002), whereas in English, seasons may take the definite article, but the months may not. E.g.

During the summer, my family spends months in our small cabin in Prevalle.

Gjate verës, familja ime kalon muaj në shtëpizën tonë në Prevallë.

July is my favourite month of the year. Korriku është muaji im i preferuar i vitit.

5. In English, when the identity of the noun is determined by a prepositional phrase or a relative clause (Thomson, & Martinet, 1991), whereas in Albanian, as a qualifier of the genitive case (Agalliu et. al., 2002) or a relative clause. E.g.

The watches of Switzerland are known as the most sophisticated watches in the world.

Orët e Zvicrës njihen si orët më të sofistikuar në botë.

The watches which Switzerland produces are the best-quality watches in the world.

Orët që i prodhon Zvicra janë orët më cilësinë më të mirë në botë.

6. When we distinguish a person or a thing by means of phrases and relative clauses (Alexander, 2003): *The woman you are trying to help is a cousin of mine.*

Gruja të cilën ti po përpiqesh ta ndihmosh është një kushërirë e imja.

The painting on the wall reflects its owner's mindset.

Piktura në mur reflekton mendësinë e pronarit/es të saj.

7. When the noun is used to refer to:

a) body parts - *the head - koka, the face - fytyra, the chest - kraharori, the back - shpina*, etc.

b) parts of the day - *the day - dita, the night - nata, the morning - mëngjesi, the afternoon - pasditja, the evening - mbrëmja*, etc.

c) musical instruments - *the piano - pianoja, the violin - violina, the guitar - kitara, the flute rty. - flauti, the saxophone - saksofoni*, etc.

8. When the noun is used with ordinal numbers: *the first, the second, the third, the fourth*, etc.

E.g. This is *the first trip* I have taken alone. Ky është *udhëtimi i parë* që po e bëj vetë.

9. In both languages, a definite noun is also used in idiomatic expressions. E.g.

After such a long time, you should finally bury the hatchet.

The sooner you finish the experiment, the better results you will get.

Njeriu duhet ta vrasë mendjen mirë e mirë para se të marrë vendime të mëdha.

Aleksandri mori fjalën dhe me elokuencën e tij mahiti të gjithë të pranishmit.

Some time expressions that in English take the definite article, such as: *at the moment, in the end, all the while, for the time being*, etc., in Albanian, result as either definite or indefinite depending on their function in the sentence.

10. When the noun follows an adjective in the comparative and superlative degree (Kabashi, 2000). In Albanian, this depends on the context. E.g.

The more acceptable choice (of the two choices) is the one that saves your self-respect.

Zgjedhja më e pranueshme (nga dy zgjedhje) është ajo që ta shpëton vetërespektin. (definite)

Zgjedhje më e pranueshme (nga dy zgjedhje) është ajo që ta shpëton vetërespektin. (indefinite)

Paris is the most impressive city in the world. Parisi është qyteti më mbresëlënës në botë.

11. In English, uncountable abstract nouns and mass noun in specific meaning may be used

as definite nouns (Eastwood, 2002), although they are randomly used without articles, but in Albanian, they may be used as both definite and indefinite nouns depending on the context. E.g.

Patience is one of the most valuable human virtues.

Durimi është një nga virtetet më të çmueshme njerëzore.

The patience he showed with my cousins' children was really disarming.

Durimi që ai tregoi me fëmijët e kushërinjve të mi ishte vërtet çarmatosës.

Wine is a sophisticated drink. People prefer the wine produced in France.

Vera është pije e sofistikuar. Njerëzit e preferojnë verën e prodhuar në Francë.

Concerning the proper nouns, in English, only few groups of proper nouns take the definite article, whereas in Albanian, proper nouns may be used as definite and indefinite nouns and undergo all rules of declension like common nouns, although they are mainly used as definite nouns (Agalliu et al., 2002). These are some of the proper nouns in English that take the definite article, and thus may be used as definite nouns the same as the proper nouns in Albanian:

1. Personal names:

a) Family names, i.e. surnames in plural used to refer to members of the same family who share the same surname (Nelson & Greenbaum, 2013). E.g.

The Hudsons I know live in Houston. Hudson-ët që unë njoh jetojnë në Houston.

b) Surnames preceded by titles:

Are you the Mrs. Jamieson? A jeni ju znj. Jamieson?

Where is the Mr. Kingsley who called the firemen? Ku është z. Kingsley i cili i thirri zjarrfikësit?

In the first example, the function of the definite article is to verify the person's identity, and, in this case, the definite article *the* is pronounced [ði:], whereas in the second example, the function of the definite article is to distinguish the person from other people with the same surname. Unlike English, in Albanian, when names take titles, it is the titles and not the names that are used in the definite form.

c) People's names:

The Robert I know would never stoop so low.

Roberti që unë njoh kurrë nuk do të binte kaq poshtë.

I like the Annabell who lives on the second, not the one who lives on the fourth floor.

Më pëlqen Annabell-a e cila jeton në katin e dytë, jo ajo e cila jeton në katin e katërt.

My classmate, Caroline, is highly intelligent. She is the Einstein of our school.

Shoqja ime e klasës, Caroline-a, është shumë inteligjente. Ajo është Einstein-i i shkollës sonë.

In the first example, the function of the definite article is to indicate that the person is behaving in a way that is not typical of him. In the second example, the definite article is used to distinguish between two people who bear the same name (Leech & Svartvik, 2003). In the third example, the definite article indicates that the person has one or more qualities of a famous personality from the field of arts, science, etc. (Rumjanceva & Kalniõa, 2003).

2. Personal titles without names, e.g. *the Queen - mbretëresha, the King - mbreti, the Duchess - dukeshë, the Duke - duka, the Sheikh - sheiku, the President - presidenti/ja, the Prime Minister - kryeministri/kryeministrja*, etc. (Kabashi, 2000). But, it should be emphasised that in Albanian, these titles are not proper nouns, thus they may be used as definite and indefinite nouns.

3. Proper nouns indicating geographical units that completely or partly consist of common nouns. E.g. *The United Kingdom (of Great Britain) - Mbretëria e Bashkuar (e Britanisë së Madhe), the Pacific (Ocean) - Oqeani Pacifik, the Mediterranean Sea - Deti Mesdhe, the River Po - Lumi Po, the Alp (Mountains)/the Alps - Malet Alpe (Alpet)*, etc.

In Albanian, as seen in examples, in cases when a geographical name consists of a proper noun and a common noun, it is the common noun that takes the definite form, whereas when a geographical name consisting of a common noun and a proper noun drops the common noun and uses only the proper noun, the proper noun becomes the bearer of definiteness. E.g. *Pacifiku, Mesdheu, Po-ja*, etc. In Albanian, the same occurs when well-known geographical names are used in the plural, namely the name drops the common noun and the proper noun is used in the definite form, the same as in English. E.g. *the Alps - Alpet*, instead of *Malet Alpe - The Alp Mountains*.

The city names may also take the definite article in order to distinguish two different aspects of the same city (Leech & Svartvik, 2003). In this function, nouns are definite in Albanian, too. E.g.

This is not the London of my childhood. Kjo nuk është Londra e fëmijërisë sime.

4. Names of public institutions (political parties, organisations, foundations, museums, galleries, theatres, etc.), historic periods, monuments, etc., e.g. *the United Nations - Kombet e Bashkuara, the Democratic Party - Partia Demokratike, the Peace Corps - Korpusi i Paqes, the Clinton Foundation - Fondacioni Klinton, the Louvre - Luvri, the Renaissance - Renesansa, the Statue of Liberty - Statuja e Lirisë*, etc. In Albanian, these nouns are treated the same as geographical names.

In English, unlike Albanian, the names of the universities are used as definite nouns only when the proper noun is preceded by the Norman genitive *of*. E.g.

The University of Manchester - Universiteti i Manchester-it
Oxford University - Universiteti i Oxford-it

5. Names of newspapers, journals and magazines, astronomical names, and names of ships: *the New York Times, The Sun, the Vogue, the Cosmopolitan, the Milky Way, the Great Bear, the Mayflower, the Titanic*, etc. In Albanian, all these names are also used as definite nouns, but unlike English, if they consist of two or more words, according to the spelling rules, the first word is written with a capital letter, whereas other words are written with small letters.

The generic reference is one of the characteristics that common definite nouns in English and Albanian share. In both languages, nouns may be used in the singular number to refer to the whole class to which they belong, i.e. as representatives of the whole class. But, unlike English, in which this reference is a feature of only countable nouns, in Albanian, the generic reference is also a feature of mass nouns, abstract nouns, gerunds, and others (Newmark, Hubbard & Prifti, 1982). E.g. *The dog is the man's best friend. Qeni është miku më i mirë i njeriut.*

Guri duhet të korret sa më shpejt që të jetë e mundur.
The wheat must be harvested as soon as possible.

2.2 Indefinite nouns in English and Albanian

Common indefinite nouns in English and Albanian, as far as their functions are concerned, share more characteristics than common definite nouns. Nevertheless, they also show some differences. The essential difference between the indefinite nouns in English and the indefinite nouns in Albanian concerns the fact that, in English, the indefiniteness implies the presence of the indefinite article *a/an*, whereas in Albanian, the article *një* is not obligatory as the case endings are the main bearers of indefiniteness. Furthermore, in some cases, the use of the article *një* with indefinite nouns is considered not only unnecessary, but also stylistically unacceptable because, in Albanian, the article *një* (*a/an*) is semantically equal to the numeral *një* (one), and when used with an indefinite noun, instead of emphasising the indefiniteness, it often places emphasis on the number. E.g.

Mrs. Anderson is an exceptional teacher. Znj. Anderson është (një) mësuese e jashtëzakonshme.

The examples above indicate that, in English, the use of the indefinite article *a/an* is imperative in marking the indefiniteness, whereas in Albanian, the indefinite article is entirely unnecessary since the indefiniteness is expressed by the relevant case endings.

Another difference between indefinite nouns in English and Albanian concerns precisely the classes of nouns that may be used as indefinite nouns.

In English, the indefinite article *a/an* is used with countable nouns in the singular number (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002), whereas in Albanian, indefinite nouns are not restricted to the singular number, they may also be used in the plural number. Furthermore, even uncountable nouns may be used as indefinite nouns. Thus, while the indefinite article *një* (*a/an*) may be used with indefinite nouns in the singular, it could be assumed that the determiners *ndonjë* (*some/any*), *disa* (*some/several/a few*) and *ca* (*some/several/a few, few, a little*) used with indefinite nouns in the plural, may also serve as indefinite articles. But, this is not the case, as Albanian does not have an indefinite article for the plural number (Newmark, Hubbard & Prifti 1982).

However, it is interesting that even in English, there are grammarians who claim that the equivalent of one of the above-mentioned determiners in Albanian, namely *some* could be

considered the plural form of the article *a/an*, but the problem lies in the fact that *some* would emphasise the idea of number (Berry, 2012), thus instead of indefiniteness, the stress would be placed on the number. But, unlike Albanian, in English, this would cause a larger problem as it would imply that even countable nouns in the plural as well as uncountable nouns that may also take *some*, could be treated as indefinite nouns, what would violate the grammar rule that states that in English, only countable nouns in the singular number may be indefinite nouns. E.g. *some friends (disa miq)*, *some water (pak ujë)*, *some wine (pak verë)*, *some money (pak (ca) para)*, etc.

Differences in the classes of nouns that may be used as indefinite nouns reflect, to some extent, on the functions of these nouns in English and Albanian. But, in spite of the differences, indefinite nouns in English and Albanian show several similarities in their main functions:

1. The descriptive, classifying, and categorising function:

Adam is a patient (at St. Mary's Hospital). Adam është (një) pacient (në spitalin St. Mary).

Mr. Davis has a collection of rare books. Z. Davis ka (një) koleksion të librave të rrallë.

In Albanian, indefinite nouns are usually used in this function after the auxiliary verbs *kam* (have) and *jam* (be) (Newmark, Hubbard & Prifti 1982). But as seen in the examples above, the same occurs in English as well.

2. The numerical function - In English and Albanian, the indefinite article, in its numerical function, has the meaning of the numeral *one - një*, hence it is often used instead of the said numeral, but Alexander (2003), argues that, in English, the indefinite article *a/an* cannot replace the numeral *one* and vice versa. Even though the indefinite article *a/an - një* is semantically equal to the numeral *one - një*, we agree that, in English, it can only partially replace the numeral *one - një*, the same as the numeral *one - një* can only partially replace the indefinite article *a/an* because their interchangeable use depends on the context. E.g.

1) *Mary has a/one blue dress and two red dresses. Mary ka një fustan të kaltër dhe dy fustane të kuq.* 2) *Mary is a/one nice woman. Mary është (një) grua e mirë.* 3) *John is a/one lucky man. John është (një) burrë fatlum.*

In the first sentence, in English, we should use the numeral *one* and not the indefinite article *a/an* because the emphasis is on the number of the dresses. Thus, in this sentence, the indefinite article *a/an* is not interchangeable with the numeral *one*. In Albanian, on the other hand, in the first sentence, the article *një* refers primarily to the number of dresses, hence we could entirely remove it as a marker of indefiniteness, as the indefiniteness could be expressed solely by case endings. In the second and third sentences, in English, the indefinite article *a/an* is interchangeable with the numeral *one*, whereas in Albanian, it may be removed without affecting the meaning. However, it should be emphasised that, unlike English, in which the indefinite article *a/an* is interchangeable with the numeral *one* when used with full numbers, fractions, money, measure, and weight, furthermore, it is even more favoured than the numeral *one*, except when we want to emphasise that we want one thing and not two or three (Kabashi, 2000), in Albanian, the indefinite article *një* and the numeral *një* have the same form and the same meaning, it is one word with two functions, hence, in this regard, we cannot talk about interchangeability, but we should necessarily highlight the necessity to use the indefinite article *një* when counting, i.e. in the numerical function, and its avoidance when its presence does not affect the meaning of the noun in regard to the indefiniteness.

In English, indefinite nouns may also be used in the generic reference, but this is not a feature they share with indefinite nouns in Albanian. E.g.

A bus is one of the commonly used means of transportation.

In both languages, the indefinite article may be used with uncountable nouns only when they are treated as countable ones. E.g.

Would you like a tea? instead of Would you like a cup of tea?

A e doni një çaj? instead of A e doni një filxhan çaj?

Proper nouns, in English and Albanian, are not usually used as indefinite nouns, but there are some exceptions.

In English, personal names may take the indefinite article in these cases:

a) When there is no information about the person, or we have not heard about him/her before (Leech & Svartvik, 2003). When used in this context, the indefinite article has the meaning

"a man/woman called..." ("njëfarë"), and the names are preceded by titles: *Mr./Mrs./Miss* (Thomson & Martinet, 1991) E.g. *A Mr.Mann has bought my cousin's old house.* *Njëfarë Z. Mann e ka blerë shtëpinë e vjetër të kushëririt tim.*

In Albanian, when personal names, surnames precisely, preceded by titles, are used in this function, the title may be placed in the definite or indefinite form depending on the context, but when personal names are used without titles, and this is a very frequent occurrence especially in colloquial speech, they are always used in the definite form. E.g.

Dje, shoqatën tonë e vizitoi njëfarë Agroni.

b) When the person has qualities that associate with a famous personality from different fields of life. E.g. *He is a Scanderbeg.*

In Albanian, proper nouns are rarely used in this function, and they are almost always used in the definite form. E.g. *Ai është Skenderbeu i kohës sonë.*

c) When the name of a famous person from the field of arts, science, etc., is used to refer to his/her works (Brinton, 2000). E.g.

A Rembrandt costs millions of dollars. Një Rembrandt kushton miliona dollarë.

d) When the name is used to refer to a member of a family (Rumjanceva & Kalniòa, 2003). E.g.

The woman who is overseeing the restoration of the famous theatre is a Jacobson.

Gruja e cila po e mbikqyr restaurimin e teatrit të famshëm është anëtare e familjes Jacobson.

In Albanian, proper indefinite nouns, surnames precisely, are never used in this function.

3. Conclusion

This paper examined the definiteness and indefiniteness of nouns in English and Albanian, the ways in which nouns in these two languages express this category, and the differences and similarities between them. The contrastive analysis indicated that there are, indeed, differences in the ways these nouns realise this category that account for many other differences that these nouns show, the key one being the presence of articles in English and the (allowed) absence of the same in Albanian. Another major difference concerns the noun classes that may take articles and thus be used as definite and indefinite nouns. Unlike English, in which articles usually accompany the common nouns, and in certain cases some proper nouns, and only countable nouns in the singular number may take the indefinite article *a/an* and thus function as indefinite nouns, Albanian is more flexible in this regard, as nouns of all classes may be used as definite and indefinite nouns, and undergo the same rules of declension accordingly. However, in spite of the differences in form, the definite and indefinite nouns in English and Albanian show many similarities in their functions. Thus, common definite nouns in both languages share the specific and the generic reference, including the situational reference, anaphoric reference, and even the cataphoric reference which is not acknowledged by Albanian grammarians. Common indefinite nouns share the descriptive, classifying, and categorising function as well as the numerical function, even though the latter does not have the same semantic value in both languages, but they do not share the generic function. In Albanian, all proper nouns may be used as definite nouns and indefinite nouns, and although this is not the case with English nouns, some of them may also take the definite article *the* and the indefinite article *a/an* to convey certain meanings, and thus approximate the proper nouns in Albanian.

References

- Aarts, B. (2011). *Oxford Modern English Grammar* (1st Edition). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Agalliu, F., Angoni, E., Demiraj, Sh., Dhimo, A., Hysa, E., Lafe, E., & Likaj, E., (2002). *Gramatika e Gjuhës Shqipe 1: Morfologjia* (Vëllimi I). Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë & Instituti i Gjuhësisë dhe Letërsisë.
- Alexander, L.G. (2003). *Longman English Grammar*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Bache, C., & Davidsen-Nielsen, N. (1997). *Mastering English: An Advanced Grammar for Non-native and Native Speakers*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Berry, R. (2012). *English Grammar: A Resource Book for Students* (Routledge English Language Introductions) (Volume I). London & New York, NY: Routledge.

- Blokh, M. Y. (1983). *A Course in Theoretical English Grammar*. Vysshaya Shkola: Moscow.
- Brinton, L. J. (2000). *The Structure of Modern English: A Linguistic Introduction* (Volume I). Amsterdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Dykes, B. (2007). *Grammar for Everyone: Practical tools for learning and teaching grammar*. Victoria: ACCER Press.
- Eastwood, J. (2002). *Oxford Guide to English Grammar*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Greenbaum, S., & Quirk, R. (1990). *A Student's Grammar of the English Language* (3rd edition). London: Longman.
- Huddleston, R., & Pullum, G. K. (2002). *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge & New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kabashi, J. (2000). *English Grammar: Morphology*. Prishtina: University of Prishtina.
- Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (2003). *A Communicative Grammar of English* (Third Edition), London: Routledge: Francis and Taylor.
- Likaj, E., & Çabej, M. (2013). *Morfologjia e shqipes standarde*, Ribotim i plotësuar dhe i përmirësuar. Tiranë: Julvin.
- Nelson, G. (2001). *English: An Essential Grammar*. London and New York, NY: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Nelson, G., & Greenbaum, S. (2013). *An Introduction of English Grammar* (Third Edition), New York, NY: Routledge.
- Newmark, L., Hubbard, P., & Prifti, P. (1982). *Standard Albanian - A Reference Grammar for Students*, Stanford, California, CA: Stanford University Press.
- O'Dwyer, B.T. (2006). *Modern English Structures: Form, Function and Position* (Second Edition). Toronto: Broadview Press.
- Palmer, R. (2003). *The Good Grammar Guide*. London & New York, NY: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Rumjanceva, L. & Kalniõa, B. (2003). *English Grammar: Morphology*. Saule: Daugavpils Universitate.
- Thomson, A.J., & Martinent, A.V. (1991). *A Practical English Grammar* (Fourth Edition), Oxford & New York, NY: Oxford University Press.